

**Governor's Proposed Budget FY18-FY19
Appropriations Hearing
Department of Housing
Friday, February 17, 2017**

Senator Formica, Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Representative Ziobron, and Members of the Committee, thank you for hearing my testimony today on the important investments through the Department of Housing to end homelessness in Connecticut. I am proud to speak before you today, representing more than 75 member agencies across the state of Connecticut working to provide shelter and end homelessness for our neighbors in need.

The current cold temperatures remind us of the urgency of our task – to make homelessness in Connecticut rare, safe, and brief. Winter weather is hard on all of us, but it presents a particularly severe challenge for the children, women, and men in our state who have no home to shield them from the cold.

The good news is this: working closely in partnership with the Department of Housing and United Way of Connecticut's 2-1-1 helpline, emergency shelters across the state have done heroic work to make shelter available to those in need. Under the Department of Housing's leadership, Connecticut's system of Coordinated Access to homeless response resources is allowing us to maximize every dollar of funding. While our emergency shelters remain at (or above) capacity, we are doing better than ever to identify and meet the needs of all those facing homelessness, and to help them move quickly into stable housing.

With the support of the Governor and the legislature, we are making real progress on ending homelessness for the people of Connecticut, and for the bottom line of our budget. Reducing homelessness in our communities relieves the cost that this important problem forces on our public systems – including emergency services, hospitals, and schools.

This is not a one-time effort: the coordinated response system we are building must be maintained to meet the needs of Connecticut residents who fall into housing crisis this year, next year, and beyond. **Cuts to the resources available for this effort would risk reversing the important progress we have made, forcing rates of homelessness again upward – increasing damage to human lives, and increasing the heavy and unnecessary costs to our taxpayers.**

Homelessness is a costly problem, in the toll it takes on human lives, and the toll it takes on public resources. We know what works to end homelessness – through coordinated efforts to secure the right housing and supports, we can resolve homelessness – one person, one family at a time. The net gain to those we serve, to our communities, and to our state is clear: it costs more to allow homelessness to persist than it does to resolve it.

For Connecticut residents, who struggle with disabling conditions like severe mental illness and have lived for years on our streets – those we refer to as “chronically homeless” – providing housing and support is the **right** thing to do. But it’s also the **smart** thing to do. Numerous studies show that housing those who have been chronically homeless allows communities to save up to 70% of the costs they otherwise incur through unnecessary emergency service calls, emergency room visits and hospital stays, repeated incarceration, and like costs.

Providers of homeless services are working harder than ever before to coordinate their efforts in each community. They are eliminating duplication of services, and making every dollar count. Combined with strategic investments by our state partners, including the Department of Housing and the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, we are making significant progress in reducing homelessness in Connecticut:

- Connecticut became the first state in the nation to end chronic homelessness (or the long term homelessness of people with disabilities) among veterans and is one of three state to effectively end homelessness amongst all veterans.
- The HUD 2015 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report showed a drop of nearly 50 % in chronic homelessness between 2014 and 2015 Connecticut – the largest reduction in any state. In December 2016, CT matched all chronically homeless individuals to a housing resource.
- Because of the state’s investments in this area combined with the fantastic work of providers on the ground, the number of people experiencing homelessness in Connecticut is dropping. The 2016 Point-in-Time (PIT) showed the lowest number of people experiencing homelessness in Connecticut, a 13% decrease since the first count in 2007 and a decline for the fourth year in a row.

We have gained every inch of this ground by forging coordination at a level uncommon in social services or for nonprofits. We are putting the client first, and at the center of a system – with service providers from different agencies working as a seamless team in each community to meet each client’s needs from the front door of shelter through appropriate housing and supports. Some clients need little help to get back on their feet. Some will need more supports, if they are to remain housed and healthy. We are working hard to target the right resources to each client, to avoid waste and to maximize impact.

With all this in mind, I respectfully request that you preserve funding for critical housing and homelessness services and supports, including:

- **The DOH Housing/Homeless Services line item, \$73.7 million in FY 18 and \$78.3 million in FY 19**, for frontline housing/homeless services, outreach, emergency shelters, and the Rental Assistance Program (RAP), which are essential to aid those who have fallen into homelessness and move them quickly to permanent housing. The Rental Assistance Program funds the rental subsidies which make Supportive Housing possible. Supportive Housing continues to be the most effective housing model to assist people experiencing chronic homelessness and is proven to cut public system costs by up to 70%.
- **The Homeless Youth line item:** Youth outreach services, crisis housing for youth, and housing services and supports are essential services to transition youth from crisis to stability.

Please know that nonprofit providers of homeless services are working hard to stretch our resources, working together like never before. Investing in ending homelessness is a smart use of public resources that prevents needless human suffering and avoids wasteful public spending – it is an investment that pays dividends across our communities in a way few other investments can equal. At the same time, reversal of our progress to end homelessness would be felt broadly, from hospitals to schools and other community services.

Thank you for your time. Thank you for your support of efforts to end homelessness in Connecticut. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

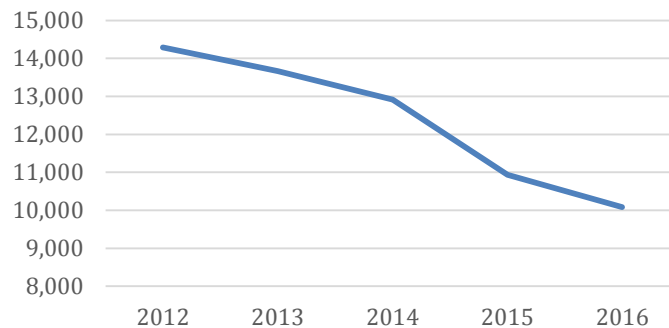
Respectfully,

Lisa Tepper Bates
Executive Director
Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness

We are Ending Homelessness in Connecticut – Let’s Keep Up the Momentum by Maintaining Critical Investments in Homeless Services!

Lower total numbers of people homeless every year for four consecutive years...

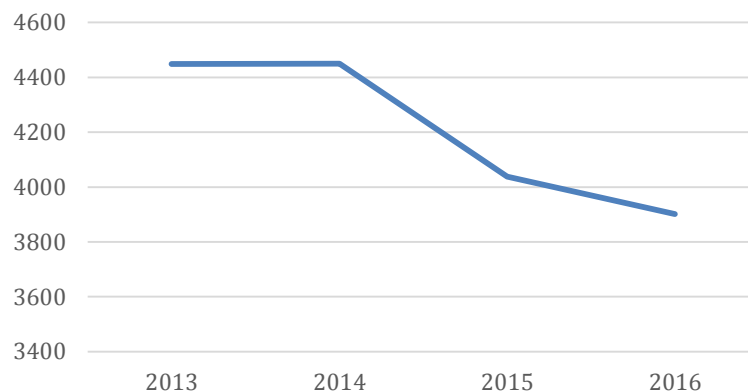
Annual Statewide Homeless Population



Source: CT Homeless Management and Information System (HMIS) FY2012-2016

A steady decrease in the total one-night annual census of homelessness, or “Point in Time” Count...

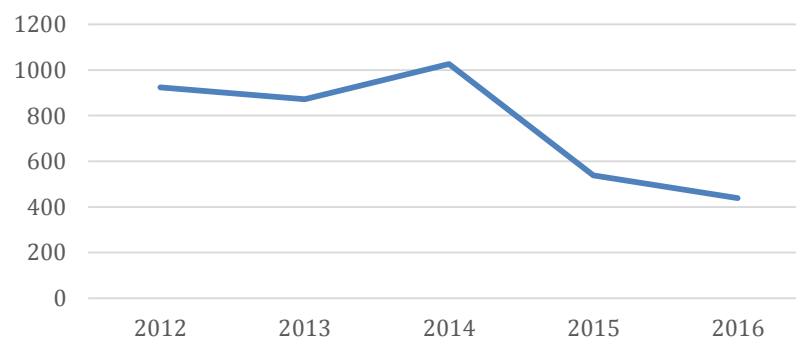
PIT - Total Population



Source: CT Point-in-Time Count Data 2013-2016

And decreasing numbers of chronically homeless in the “Point in Time” Count...

Chronic Homelessness



Source: CT Point-in-Time Count Data 2012-2016